

# Dr. Seuss and Resource Use



## Objective

To learn about resources and the potential negative impacts humans can have on the environment through overconsumption.



## Activity Description

Students will listen to the teacher read *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. The teacher will then show the class products that exemplify reduced resource consumption.



## Materials Needed

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss



## Key Vocabulary Words

Natural resources  
Pollution  
Ecosystem  
Consumption



## Duration

2 hours



## Skills Used

Reading  
Problem solving



science



language  
arts



## Activity

### Day 1: Listening Exercise

**Step 1:** Introduce and discuss the concept of natural resources and product consumption with students (refer to the Teacher Fact Sheet titled *Natural Resources* on page 5). Review vocabulary words above. Note how humans continue to consume more and more products, which takes a toll on the environment.

Explain that ecosystems are comprised of many different interrelated components, such as different plant and animal species. Add that when one part of an ecosystem is disturbed, it impacts the entire ecosystem.

**Step 2:** Take students to a quiet area outside where they can sit comfortably and listen without distractions. Have students sit in a circle. Once settled, ask students to close their

eyes and take three long deep breaths to help them relax.

**Step 3:** Once students are calm and attentive, read *The Lorax* out loud. In this story, a character called the “Once-ler” cuts down “Truffula” trees for their valuable silk tufts and uses them to make “thneeds.” Due to increasing thneeds sales, the Once-ler builds a factory and invents an axe that can cut down four trees at once. The Lorax, a wise creature of the forest, recognizes the potential harm this could have on the Truffula tree forest ecosystem. He speaks up to defend the trees, animals, air, and water that the Once-ler is destroying in pursuit of more money and to satisfy those who want thneeds. Eventually all the Truffula trees are depleted, and the Once-ler can no longer produce thneeds. The once beautiful site is left contaminated with polluted air and water.



### Journal Activity

Remind students that the Lorax spoke for the trees, "for the trees have no tongues." Ask students to choose one thing in the environment that is in jeopardy and cannot speak for itself and defend it. Why is it in jeopardy?

**Step 4:** Discuss the story with the students. Begin by asking them why the Once-ler is called the "Once-ler." Evaluate why the Once-ler had to use all the Truffula trees and ask the students to speculate why he would not listen to the Lorax. Ask the students if they can suggest a way for the Once-ler to make thneeds without destroying the ecosystem in which the Lorax lived.

**Step 5:** Have students suggest "thneeds" that they often use (e.g., clothes, food, books). Instruct students to go home that night and think about how they can consume less resources while still using their thneeds. One example is buying used clothing instead of new clothing. Instruct students to bring in their thneed for a "show and tell" activity the following day.

### Day 2: "Show and Tell"

**Step 1:** Have students present their thneed and explain their solution for consuming less resources while using their thneed. If the student cannot think of a solution, ask the class to contribute its ideas.



### Assessment

1. Ask the students why the Once-ler cut down the Truffula trees.
2. Ask the students why the Brown Bar-ba-loots have to leave the forest after the Once-ler starts his thneed production. Could something like this happen in real life? How?
3. Have students list three ways the Thneed factory caused problems for the Truffula Tree forest and its residents.
4. Have students explain what the Lorax's message "Unless" means (answers should include the need for future generations to protect and care for the Earth).



### Enrichment

1. Break students into groups of approximately five students. Have students rewrite *The Lorax* so that the Truffula tree forest and its inhabitants are saved. Students can use this to develop a script and act out their own story in front of the class.
2. Instruct students to create a collage of their needs and wants, labeling them "thneeds" and "thwants," by cutting pictures out of magazines. Once the collages are complete, ask the students to tell the class about opportunities to use less resources with the thneeds and thwants.